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**Lake County Residents and Candidates Gather to Support
the Restoration of Medicaid Funding**

Libertyville, IL – Hundreds of health care employees and Lake County residents gathered at Winchester House to watch candidates for political office sign their commitment to reforming Medicaid and restoring funds for elderly and disabled care. The Medicaid cuts went into effect July 1, 2002 and the \$110 million decrease will have a dramatic effect on the quality of care nursing home residents receive throughout Illinois.

Lake County Board Chairman Suzi Schmidt, Winchester House Administrator, Steve Nussbaum, and a representative from the Life Services Network addressed the public and candidates to educate them on the serious implications that the Medicaid cut will have. After the presentation, candidates for State of Illinois offices were asked to sign a Commitment to Care pledge promising to restore Medicaid funding. The candidates were available for informal conversation with the voters for a short time after the presentation.

Major State cuts in funding for elderly and disabled care have created funding shortages, impacting agencies' ability to provide quality health and human services. Two-thirds of all nursing home residents depend upon the State to meet their health care needs through the Medicaid program. Nursing homes are more dependent on Medicaid funding than any other healthcare provider.

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Commitment to Care – 2 of 2

The Medicaid cut is the equivalent to the salaries of 5,500 caregivers in one year. This cut will inevitably lead to thousands of nursing home staff losing their jobs throughout the state because 79 percent of all nursing home costs are labor-related. With fewer staff to provide care, the health and well being of the state's nursing home residents are in peril.

Illinois is one of the ten largest economies in the country, but with this cut to Medicaid, Illinois ranks 49th in the nation for funding to nursing home residents. Illinois is 27% below the national average.

Lake County Board Chairman Suzi Schmidt stated that, "Nursing home residents are the people that spent a lifetime building the society we live in today. They have spent years caring for us and now we need to care for them."

Winchester House hosted this event because the residents and staff are feeling the effects of the State Medicaid cuts. 88% of the residents at Winchester House depend on public aid for their care. The cost for Winchester House to care for one resident is \$146 per day. The State reimbursement to Winchester House is only \$93 per day. Before the Medicaid cuts, the State reimbursed \$99 per day. The cost of caring for nursing home residents has risen twice as fast in the past nine years as the state's Medicaid payments.

The Rally concluded with eight candidates pledging their Commitment to Care. Eddie Washington, Susan Garrett, Terry Link, Steve Skinner, Judy Armstrong, Glenn Rayback, Nancy Shepherdson and Kathy Ryg all signed a pledge at Winchester House.

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